

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The amendments set out above and the following remarks are believed responsive to the points raised by the Office Action dated March 23, 2009 and the Advisory Action dated June 3, 2009. In view of the amendments set out above and the following remarks, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The Pending Claims

Claims 10 and 11 have been canceled, claims 1-9, 12, and 13 remain pending, and claims 14-16 have been added.

Claims 14-16 have been added to describe the invention more clearly. No new matter has been added, the basis for the amended claim language may be found within the original specification, claims and drawings.

Claims 14 and 16 are supported at, for example, page 21, lines 2-6 and 21-23. Claim 15 is supported at, for example, page 21, lines 7-10 and 23-26. Entry of the above is respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 USC 103(a)

Claims 1-9 and 12-13 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,167,809 to Mann (hereinafter referred to as "Mann '809") in view of U.S. Patent 6,736,974 to Mann (hereinafter referred to as "Mann '974").

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action dated March 23, 2009 states, in view of the sentence bridging columns 3 and 4 in Mann '809, that the "piston may be lowered through the bottom end of the column and hence permits access to the piston."

There is no suggestion in Mann '809 of providing an access spacing between the second end of the tube and a second end cell structure and advancing the piston from a first end of a column tube toward a second end to allow it to be exposed at the open bottom end of the cylinder such that maintenance of the exposed piston portion is carried out. Mann '809

teaches that once the piston is lowered through the bottom end of the column it remains surrounded by the container **20**, and “piston **11** will have to be retracted before the container **20** can be removed” (col. 4, lines 5-6). There is no teaching or suggestion of providing access spacing between the second end of the column tube and a second end cell structure and exposing the advanced piston portion at the open second end of the column, and in fact, Mann ‘809 merely teaches that after the container **20** is removed, the piston is *kept* in the retracted position, bottom end cap **5** is replaced, and clamp **21** is fastened to hold the bottom end cap **5** in place (column 4, lines 12-13; emphasis added).

Mann ‘974 also fails to teach or suggest advancing a piston from the top end of a column tube toward the bottom end such that the advanced piston is exposed at the open bottom end. Rather, Mann ‘974 teaches raising the plunger **20** from a top **54** of the cavity **22** within the cylinder **12** (col. 4, lines 52-54; Fig. 4). After maintenance, the plunger **20** is lowered, but is never advanced such that it is exposed at the open bottom end of the cylinder **12** such that maintenance of the exposed plunger is carried out (*see, for example*, Fig. 5 and col. 5, lines 12-20).

While the Office Action states that Mann ‘974 discloses it is desirable to perform screen replacing maintenance after accessing the second end, neither Mann ‘974 nor Mann ‘809 teaches or suggests accessing an exposed piston extending from the second end of a tube. Accordingly, there is no suggestion in Mann ‘809 and Mann ‘974 of advancing a piston from a first end of a column tube toward a second end to allow it to be exposed at the open bottom end of the cylinder such that maintenance of the exposed piston portion is carried out, and there is no explanation in the Office Action as to why this specific modification would have been obvious to one of skill in the art.

Moreover, there is no suggestion in the cited references of advantages that can be provided by embodiments of the invention, e.g., providing access positions for the first and second ends of the column tubes that are relatively close to one another and/or greatly reducing the potential access height requirement (*see, for example*, the present application, page 10, lines 18-24).

Accordingly, reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Since independent claim 1 is allowable for the reasons set forth above, the dependent claims are allowable as they depend from the novel and non-obvious independent claim 1.

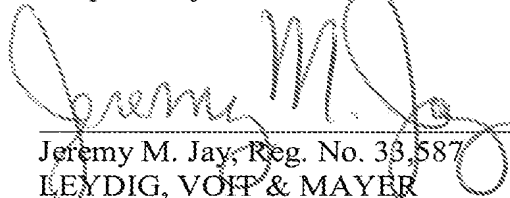
Moreover, with respect to newly added dependent claims 14-16, there is no teaching or suggestion in Mann '809 and/or Mann '974 of "moving a safety plate and blocking movement of the second end of the column tube toward the second end cell structure to maintain the access spacing" (claim 15) or including "moving guide rods having projecting stops limiting the height to which the second end of the column tube can be separated from the second end cell structure" (claims 14 and 16).

For these additional reasons, reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of the subject application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,



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